

Statement of Ambassador Gillian Milovanovic
September 7, 2005
Government Building, Skopje

Good Morning.

It is a great pleasure and honor to be here in the Republic of Macedonia. Prime Minister Buckovski and I have just had a cordial and productive meeting. I expressed to the Prime Minister that it is a privilege for me to represent President Bush and the American people in the Republic of Macedonia, a country that is working to overcome inter-ethnic differences in a way that will serve as an example of cooperation in the Western Balkans.

Yesterday I presented my letter of credence to President Crvenkovski, and also had very cordial meetings with the President and with Foreign Minister Mitreva. I was happy to tell them that my service as Ambassador begins at a time when there are excellent relations between our two nations, especially as we approach the 10th anniversary of the establishment of full diplomatic relations between the United States and the Republic of Macedonia.

I also have expressed to the President, Prime Minister and Foreign Minister my sincere appreciation for the messages of condolence the Embassy has received from them and from the people of Macedonia following the terrible natural disaster in my country caused by Hurricane Katrina. In addition, I expressed my thanks for the offer of assistance from the Government of Macedonia, the details of which we will be working out in the coming days. This is another example of the strong relationship that exists between our two countries.

Macedonia also is continuing its steady progress toward full Euro-Atlantic integration. To reach its goal, the government and all the citizens of this country will be asked to redouble their efforts to accomplish necessary reforms. Those efforts will help strengthen democratic institutions, reform the electoral system, encourage economic growth and development, and combat the insidious forces of corruption and organized crime.

We will continue to stand together with you in those endeavors. We are pleased that, with the July passage of the Law on Community Symbols, Macedonia has completed the legislative requirements of the Framework Agreement. We will continue to support your efforts to achieve implementation of equitable representation and decentralization under the Framework Agreement.

Macedonia's place is in the Euro-Atlantic community, and we hope to welcome Macedonia as a fellow member of NATO. Macedonia's participation with Albania and Croatia in the Adriatic Charter is an important stepping-stone toward the goal of eventual NATO membership. We welcome the recent deployment of the A-3 joint medical unit to Afghanistan. And we are grateful for Macedonia's continuing contributions

to coalition efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan, as together we continue to fight the global war on terror.

In my first few days here, I have already experienced the warmth and hospitality for which Macedonia is well-known. I look forward to meeting and talking with people in all walks of life – including the media – and visiting institutions throughout this country. Macedonia is blessed with great natural beauty, cultural diversity, a rich history, and a promising future. I am pleased and honored to begin my service as the U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Macedonia, and I look forward in the years ahead to further strengthening our relationship.